

HISTORY OF JAMES CRAWFORD MURDOCH

James Crawford Murdoch was the third son of John M. and Isabella Crawford Murdoch. He was born February 11, 1869, in Heber City, Utah, where he lived out his remaining life. He was known by people of his own age and older as "Skinny Jim". This was due to there being another man named James S. Murdock living in Heber who was a much larger man than James Crawford and was known as "Big Jim".

James Crawford's boyhood days were spent very much like those of other pioneer children; herding cows, gathering wood, going fishing, and swimming in the swimming holes and streams near his home. As he grew older, he played on the Heber baseball team and also played a bass horn in the city band.

James grew up in the Mormon Church and was a very active member throughout his life, having served on two missions and serving on the High Council of the Wasatch Stake for 25 years. In February 1898, he was called on an L.D.S. mission to serve as a traveling elder in the Wisconsin Conference of the Northern States Mission and was released from the mission on March 15, 1900. During his mission, the missionaries traveled without purse or script and depended upon the saints in the area for room and board.

After completing his mission and returning to his home in Heber City, Utah, James married Sarah Elizabeth Giles on November 27, 1901, in the Salt Lake Temple. To this union eight children were born; three girls and five boys--Mary Althora Sackett, Sarah LaRaine Giles, James Ruelof, George Merrol, John Bard, Grant Brigham, Ruby Isabel Jaspersen, and Thomas Verd.

Shortly after their marriage, James was called on another mission for 18 months to Mesa, Arizona. While on this mission, his eldest child, Mary Althora, was born. His wife and baby lived with Sarah's father and mother until his return in 1903, then they moved into a small log house located on the corner of 2nd West and 4th South in Heber City, Utah. This home and lot was a wedding present given to them by Sarah's parents.

James, Sarah, and family lived in this house until 1913, when they moved into their new home which they had built by John Bond. The new home is located at the same address, still stands today, and is owned by their son, Grant. The older home was sold to Wilford Howarth and his wife and was moved to where it stands today at 217 North 1st West in Heber City, Utah.

Basically, James Crawford's occupation was that of a freighter and farmer. As a freighter, he would haul supplies from Wasatch County to Duchesne County and on the return trips would

James Crawford Murdoch

haul wool for the sheepmen and other supplies back to Heber. While farming, he also raised cattle and horses. He had some well bred draft horses which were generally sold to a Mr. Spalding out of Salt Lake City, Utah. Sugar beets and, later, peas for the canning company were the main cash crops raised. James also took on many other various jobs to support his wife and growing family. During the winter months he worked in the mines at Park City, worked as a night watchman for the Woodscross Canning Company, and was a member of the threshing crew during harvest time, going from farm to farm threshing their grain. He did everything possible to keep his family warm, clothed, and fed. Each fall, he would go into the hills and get enough wood for winter, and the same with coal, by driving a team and wagon to Coalville to get the winter's supply of coal. He would take grain to Johnson's grist mill, located in Midway, and have the grain ground into flour. A trip would be made by team and wagon to Provo, with his wife, Sarah, or one of the children accompanying him. This trip was to get enough fruit to can and bottle for the winter, with generally a trip later to Provo for a load of apples. These supplies, together with a five gallon can of honey from Duchesne and items raised on the farm, which included meat, potatoes, eggs, and milk, gave the family ample supplies for winter. Also to be noted, is that James and Sarah had their own cheese press to make cheese for the family and a smoke-house to smoke meat, such as hams and bacon from hogs raised on the farm.

Early in his married life, James was stricken with arthritis from which he suffered greatly, and eventually became an invalid. All chores and farm work was turned over to his wife and sons. He would ride to the fields in the buggy or wagon and show his sons what and how things were to be done. This included plowing and tilling the soil, planting, irrigating, and harvesting. His wife, Sarah, would also help out in the fields as much as she could, especially in harvesting the sugar beets and picking potatoes. James would also hire William and Nancy Thompson, their neighbors, to help with the sugar beet harvesting.

In the fall of 1922, after all the hay was in the barn and two stacks erected outside and the threshing was done, fire wiped out the barn, sheds, and all the hay and straw. The grain in the grainery and the home were saved, although the paint on the house was badly blistered and some windows were cracked. James had been kind to people in need of help all through his married life. He would have his sons deliver a load of hay to this widow or that widow so she could feed her cows. When butchering for the family, meat would be sent to various neighbors. At Thanksgiving and Christmas time it was always a sack of flour, potatoes, and meat to be sent to Auntie Mayoh, his wife's aunt, and others.

People had remembered what James had done and after the fire, donations of all kinds came to him, and the neighbors gathered

together and built a new barn for his stock. Others helped by bringing a load of hay to feed the stock. This help was never forgotten by either James or Sarah.

In the fall of 1924, fire strdck again, burning two stacks of wild hay in the north fields. The cause of this fire was never determined, but was another set back in the lives of James and Sarah.

James continued to have health problems. In 1935, he had cataracts removed from both of his eyes. After the operation, he could see fairly good out of one eye, but the other remained to have blurred vision. In 1937, he started suffering from excrutiating pains above the good eye. He was taken to Salt Lake City for treatment. Upon examination by the eye specialist, Dr. Palmer, he found an abcess back of the good eye. This condition necessitated the removal of the eye, leaving him with only the one eye with the blurred vision. He had been an avid reader all of his life, reading mostly the scripture. From this time on, his faithful wife, Sarah, would read news items, letters, and scriptures to him.

James was a devoted church member and served to the best of his ability. Even after it was hard for him to get around, he would carry a cushion to church to sit on. He was also called upon to administer to the ill time after time. It has been said by those with authority that James had been blessed with the power for healing. He taught his children the truths of the gospel and what prayer and the priesthood meant to each of them. The priesthood was always in his and Sarah's home. All of his children, except one, who is not married, have been married in the temple. As of this writing, he has had two sons, five grandsons, and nine greatgrandsons serve on missions. His sons have held church positions as bishops and counselors, stake presidents and counselors, ward clerks and temple workers.

James liked to be with his children and entertain them whenever he could. He would take the older boys, together with their friends swimming, fishing to Current Creek, to the circus in Provo or to Salt Lake by way of Provo by train to the State Fairs. The neighbor boys, as well as his own sons, would look forward to these trips. At the age of 82, James went hunting with his son, Merrol, Noah Giles, and Noah's son, Elvin, and others, and stayed in the hills until they had killed their deer. James didn't do any hunting, nor did he carry a gun, but went along to enjoy the outing with them.

James was strict, but fair, with his children. All chores had to be done before play. Animals had to be taken care of before the family meals. At meal time, everyone was expected to be at home. Once each day, generally at the evening meal, family prayers were held. On Sunday morning, every child was required to have his chores done and be ready in time for Sunday School, and the same for Sacrament Meeting.

James always kept his machinery and wagons painted and under sheds when not in use. Each spring, the harnesses had to be disassembled, washed, dried, and soaked in Neat's foot oil and then reassembled. Every two or three years the house had to be painted. After James became ill and couldn't do these things, he tried to impress upon his sons the importance of maintenance of tools and equipment.

In November of 1951, James Crawford and his wife, Sarah, celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary with all of there children present.

James always looked forward to the Murdoch Family reunions, where he could visit with his brothers and sisters and other members of the family.

James Crawford Murdoch passed away August 4, 1959, at the age of 90. He had been the oldest living person in Wasatch County at that time. On the date of this writing, he has a living posterity of 118.

Written by Grant B. Murdoch (son),
with contributions from other
family members - May 1980